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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000549

SIPDIS

CENTCOM AND EUCOM: PLEASE PASS TO POLADS AND J-5

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/10/2013

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: PRESS ALLEGATIONS OF USG SUPPORT FOR PKK:  
OUR RESPONSE

(U) Classified by Ambassador W.R. Pearson. Reason:  
1.5(b)(c)(d)

1. (C) Summary: Amid strong anxiety in Turkey about a possible war with Iraq, recent reports in the Turkish media alleging that the USG and specific members of the Mission staff are in contact with and supporting the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK, aka KADEK) have been brought to our attention at senior levels of the MFA and other GOT bureaucracies. We have categorically denied the allegations to senior GOT officials and to the press. End Summary.

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Accusations in the Press  
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2. (U) Beginning in January, the weekly "Aydinlik" magazine, which espouses a militant leftist-Kemalist ideological line, began to run stories alleging that USG officials (including CIA) are in contact with, and supplying millions of dollars to, the terrorist PKK/KADEK. Worker's Party leader Dogu Perincek, for whom both "Aydinlik" and the new "Ulusal" TV Station serve as vehicles, also claimed that the State Security Court Prosecutor's Office began an official investigation Jan. 6, specifically into "reports" that CIA had provided the PKK with USD 125 million to begin preparations for a renewed terror campaign in Turkey.

3. (U) The stories are surfacing in the mainstream press. The Jan. 18 and Jan. 21 editions of the daily "Milliyet" carried two articles claiming that: 1) USG officials met with PKK/KADEK members in a Middle Eastern country in January 2002; and 2) Davut Bagistani, a notorious suspected PKK figure, had arranged six such meetings, the most recent in early December 2002. Other papers followed suit on Jan. 22, adding the assertion that the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) had "confirmed" the meetings, and that Gen. Ozkok, Chief of the Turkish General Staff (TGS), had raised the issue with Gen. Myers during their Jan. 20 meeting in Ankara. In a subsequent press conference, Perincek alleged that DCM, D/Polcouns, and Embassy Press Officer -- all of whom he had earlier accused of various allegedly nefarious pro-Islam and pro-Kurdish activities -- are "managing" the USG-PKK relationship and should be PNG'd forthwith. The Jan 23 "Milliyet" again reported Perincek's line.

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MFA Raises the Issue  
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4. (S) MFA U/S Ziyal raised the matter with Ambassador Jan 22, presenting him with a copy of an article in the daily "Aksam." Ziyal said that "we know Bagistani -- he is a shady character." He also stated that he "knows" from his time at the Turkish Mission in Damascus that CIA had contact with PKK years ago -- "not with Ocalan, but others." Ambassador replied that its conceivable the PKK may well be trying to create the impression that they are in contact with the USG. Nevertheless, there is nothing to these stories. Ambassador further noted that Embassy went on public record to deny the allegations.

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Comment  
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5. (C) Based on all information available to us, we have categorically denied the allegations to senior GOT officials and to the press. Perincek and his media organs appear to have been the first to generate the stories. A noted leftist-nationalist gadfly, Perincek made headlines last year

by exposing to public view reports, highly critical of Turkey, by the EU's Ambassador to Turkey -- which she had sent to Brussels via unclassified e-mail. Perincek claimed he had obtained the reports from friends in "the security apparatus"; politicians and others in Ankara take it as gospel that Perincek has connections to elements of the military/intelligence. Aydinlik's distribution is small, as is support for Perincek's Worker's Party. Nevertheless, as reflected in both Ziyal's evident suspicions and in the willingness of mainstream press to pick up on these allegations, the ideas espoused by Perincek/Aydinlik have considerable currency among the Establishment and the intelligentsia.

PEARSON